

December 26, 2018

An Open Letter to Hackensack Acting Superintendent of Schools Rosemary Marks and Board of Education President Lara Rodriguez from Mayor John Labrosse

I am writing to voice my concern with the upcoming \$169 Million school referendum on January 22 that very few residents are aware of. I am surprised that the Board has not yet sent any mailings to inform taxpayers about this issue. Holding a couple of forums that are attended by a handful of people is certainly not adequate transparency when so much is at stake.

There is no question that our schools are in a state of serious disrepair, largely due to years of neglect and lack of proper maintenance. Everyone knows our children deserve better. But is this the best plan for our City?

My neighbors are stunned when I tell them that the referendum's approval will raise their property taxes by more than \$400 – and that this does not include the cost of staffing and maintaining a new school building. I assume that a cost analysis has been done, and I urge you to release this information to the public.

Many of us feel that voters should be given more of a choice. We believe that a more phased-in approach that lessens the immediate impact on taxpayers would be a better plan. Let's take care of those long ignored maintenance issues and make the required upgrades to modernize our schools. Let voters approve these steps before asking them to pay for a \$100 million new school at the same time.

Building a new school may be necessary – but that is certainly not clear right now.

If Maywood and other sending districts are successful in their efforts to remove their 500 students from our high school and send them elsewhere, the overcrowding issue would disappear overnight. There is also the ongoing investigation of how many other out of town students may be attending our schools in violation of state law. These issues should be resolved before asking voters to approve paying for a new school.

Therefore, I am asking that the January 22 referendum be postponed and delayed until these and other pressing issues are addressed. Our taxpayers should not be asked to take on such a tremendous burden when it is not clear that it is absolutely necessary.

Respectfully,

Mayor John Labrosse

This letter is sent as a private citizen and at no expense to taxpayers